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by Percy Waxman

1. Poetry, American

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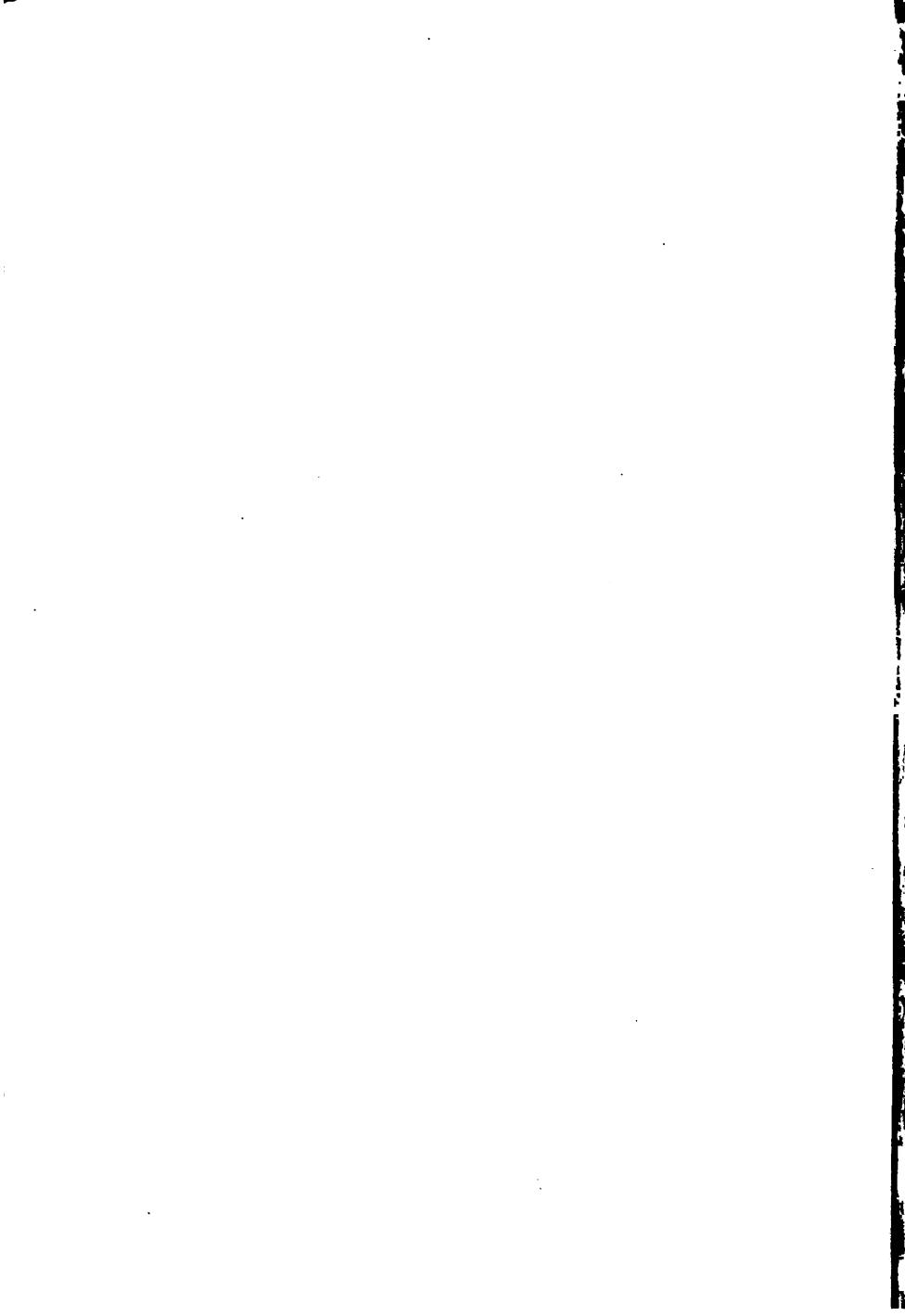
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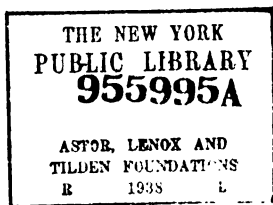
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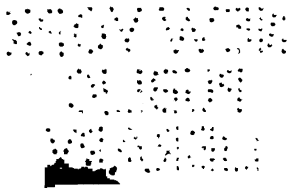
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To C—

regretting that the verses are not better, but joyfully realizing that if they were, somebody else would have the pleasure of dedicating this book to her.

THE AUTHOR.

These verses have already been published in *Harper's Magazine*, *The Outlook*, *Munsey*, *Adventure*, *Ainslee's*, *Vanity Fair*, *Pictorial Review*, *Life*, *Judge*, *The New York Sun*, *The New York Tribune*, *The New York World*, etc., and the author gratefully acknowledges permission from these publications to reprint.

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FORESTALLING THE CRITICS

YOU *may* think these verses of mine
 Are puerile, witless or rotten;
 You *may* think there isn't a line
 That shouldn't be quickly forgotten.

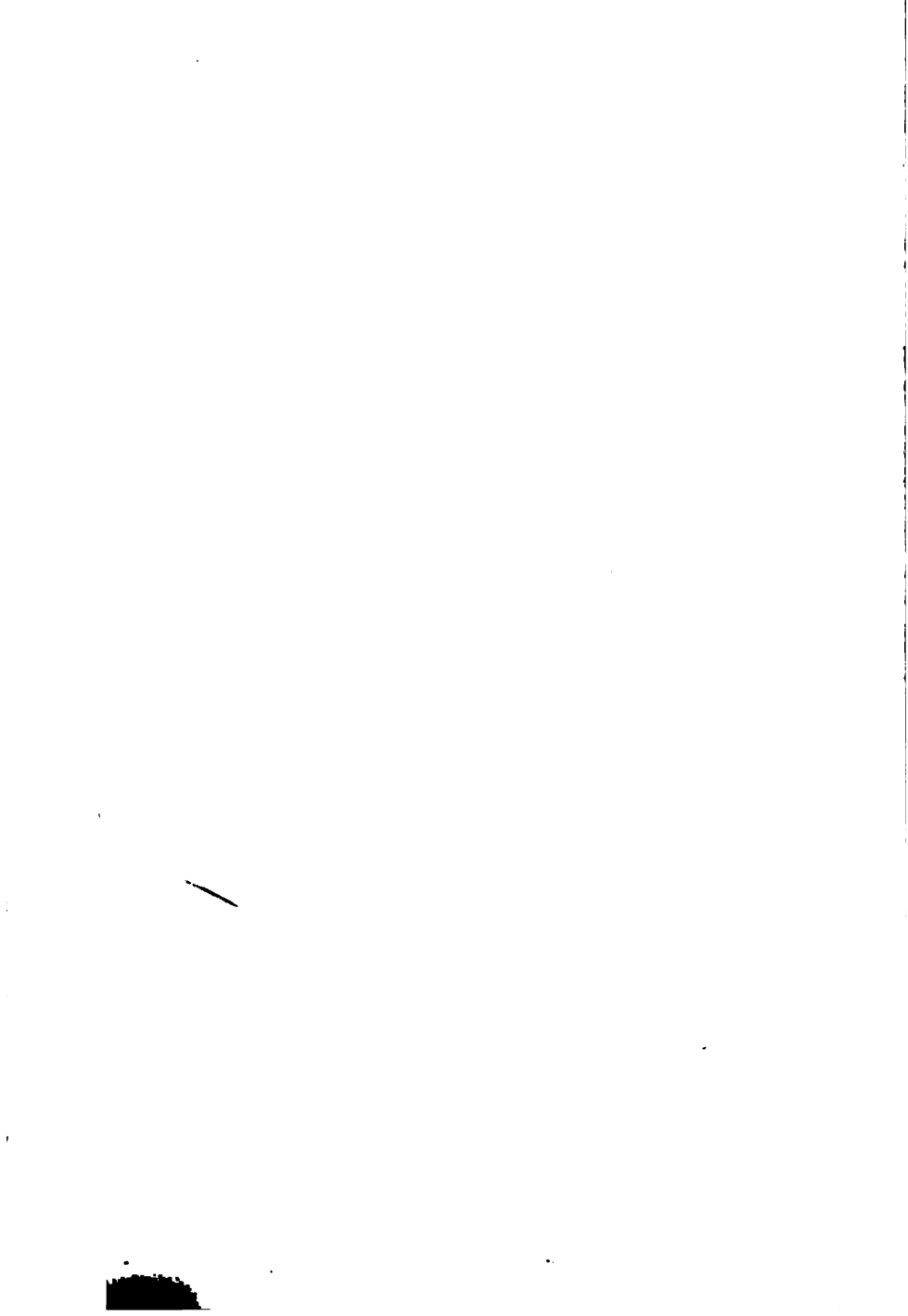
You may, perhaps, say with a sneer
 That the volume's not clever or funny,
 And the sole reason why it is here
 Is the author's dire need of the money.

You may think the publishers mad
 For taking such desperate chances,
 By issuing verses so bad
 And risking their name and finances.

You may, when you write your review,
 Heap language on me quite mephitic;
 Well, I'd do the same thing as you,
 If I had your job as a critic.



EROTICA



V E R S I F L A G E

THE CLOTHES LINE

UPON the roof tops I saw swaying
A line of tattered garments in the breeze,
Their rents and patches pitif'ly betraying
Another one of life's mean tragedies.

But as I watched them gaily flying,
No whining tale of shame they told the street.
They seemed to wave—those blues and crimsons drying,
Like proud flung flags that would not own defeat.

KNOWLEDGE

WHAT can I know of love, you say—
With my awkward ways and silent air,
When never a soul for one brief day
Has cast on me a thought or care!

'Tis little I've had of love, that's true,
No warm red lips my own have kissed;
But it's not the things that come to you
You know most of—*but what you've missed.*

V E R S I F L A G E

MY CLOCK

I'VE a funny old clock that marks each hour
In a very original way,
It seems to be swayed by some magical power
In telling the time of day.

When its hands are pointing to half past two
The chimes strike eleven straight;
It may sound a little bit queer to you
But by that I know it is eight.

And it makes me think of a friend of mine
Who is outwardly vain and cold.
And you'd never dream (for he gives no sign)
That within dwells a heart of gold.

He is kind and dear, though his manner's rough
And his laughter seems to mock.
But I only smile when his tones are gruff,
For I think of my quaint, old clock.

MAGIC

LAST night a maiden sowed one glance
Within the garden of my heart.
Today by some magician's art,
Love blooms there in full radiance.

ON FIFTH AVENUE

I OFTEN stand and watch the twinkling feet
 Of dainty maids as they go flitting by,
 It brings delight to my enraptured eye
 To see their pretty shoes, so trim and neat
 As they, in one brief kiss, the pavement meet;
 Then off again they seem to fairly fly
 Like little, fluttering birds . . . And sad, I sigh
 In envy of the lucky, dusty street.

Don't talk to me of what you've seen in Spain
 Or Italy or Timbuctoo or France;
 I care not if you prove that in Cockaigne
 The smallest feet of all exist, perchance.
 Give me New York's! I'd gladly let them dance
 Upon myself—they're far too light to pain.

HOPE

YOU do not love me dear, you say
 There's no use trying;
 Perhaps you may some future day
 My soul keeps crying.

A seed I've planted in your heart—
 Without your knowing;
 Some Spring you'll waken with a start
 To find love growing.

THE SMILE

I WAS arrested yesterday afternoon.
 Yes, arrested, for insulting a woman.
 Mashing, I think, was the way the charge was worded.
 I can hardly realize it yet.
 I had been over in Jersey nearly all day, tramping with
 Elaine.
 The glory of the Fall day seemed to have seeped into my
 veins.
 There were brown leaves everywhere;
 The sky was never bluer,
 The atmosphere never clearer,
 And Elaine never more companionable.
 Such a day!
 We lunched at a funny little French place way up on
 the Palisades.
 The food was poor, the tablecloth soiled, and the smell
 of cheap wine clung to the room.
 But Elaine's laugh made the meal something to remem-
 ber.
 I left her at 96th Street at five o'clock and hurried
 downtown in the subway.
 Happiness, happiness was singing within me.
 My heart was warm with the sunshine of life.

I felt like crying my joy aloud.
 Crossing 42nd Street I noticed a girl waiting for a long
 line of motors to go by.
 Poor, pale, wan thing, such sadness looked out of her
 tired eyes!
 She wasn't pretty, and not at all the kind of a girl to
 attract a man's attention.
 But oh! she did look sad.
 "Been standing in some store all day," I thought.
 And *then* I thought of how I had spent *my* day.
 That saddened me a little,
 And I felt how much I'd like to bring one ray of
 sunshine even for a minute into her lonely face.
 At that very moment she happened to glance my way
 and I smiled at her—smiled in a friendly way as I
 might at a child who looked tired and unhappy.
 I spoke no word.
 I made no move
 But she called a policeman and had me arrested.
 Tomorrow I face a court and possibly disgrace.
 As God is my judge, I swear I only meant to try to
 smile a little happiness into that poor girl's life . . .
 And now I'm wondering will the court believe me.

MEMORIES

I LOVE you tonight, will I love you tomorrow—
 Or will dawning of day bring regrets in its train?
 Will the thought of tonight bring me surcease of sorrow?
 Or merely intensify anguish and pain?

I love you tonight, will I love you tomorrow—
 How queerly that sounds for a lover's refrain!
 You stand there as straight as a poplar by Corot
 But I see by your eyes I have hurt you, Elaine.

Hurt *you*, who have lovingly helped me to borrow
 Release for a night from my brooding and pain;
 But oh! how I fear when I wake on the morrow
 I'll find you have brought back *her* mem'ry again.

TO ALICE

LIKE a fragrant and exquisite wine
 That fills and flows over its chalice,
 Your love with a spirit divine,
 Streams out to humanity, Alice.

It reaches the evil and good,
 The failures, the hungry, the earthy.
 How often I've prayed that it would
 Reach some one — ahem! — who was worthy.

PARTED

I HOPED you'd be easy to miss
 But I find that you're not.
 I prayed to forget your last kiss
 But it's still burning hot.
 I thought, once we'd journeyed apart
 And you'd gone on your way,
 Your image I'd tear from my heart;
 But it's with me today.
 Oh! I was a pitiful fool
 Yes, for dreaming that dream;
 Remembrance of you's like a pool
 Ever fed by a stream,
 And as I was folded last night
 In a new love's embrace,
 I saw in the pallid, dim light
 God! not hers, but your face.

THE OPERA LIBRETTO

THERE'S always a pining soprano
 Singing a whining *piano*;
 She looks fat and lazy,
 Is frequently crazy,
 And often tempts Fate with a knife.
 (So easily singers take life.)

The basso is always the father
 Does *he* like a murder? Well, rather!
 He's cranky and scrappy,
 He never seems happy,
 His voice is too deep to be gay.
 (But they soon put *him* out of the way.)

In every opera libretto
 The barytone wields a stiletto;
 He scorns modern trifles
 Like pistols or rifles,
 For shooting does muss up a floor.
 (And barytones simply hate gore.)

The contralto too, merely through malice,
 Makes her rival drink deep from a chalice,
 Which of course she's been filling
 With poison for killing
 The lady who stands in her way.
 (A murder to her is like play.)

At the end of the opera the chorus
 Is all that's left living before us ;
 And it makes many wonder,
 Like me, why in thunder
 Librettos are gloomy with crime.
 (Can't an opera be happy some time?)

DARKNESS

MY life was night—
 And then, like some dawn-flame
 You came,
 And brought me light.

Love filled my days,
 And set the captive free
 In me
 To sing your praise.

Now all seems vain,
 For when you went away
 That day,
 Night came again.

THE MODERN ADVENTURER

I HAVE sailed the stormy ocean, I have tramped in
 every land,
 I have punched my "cow" and ridden lonely ranges.
 I have led bold expeditions, crossed the desert's burning
 sand,
 I have helped revolts that caused dynastic changes.
 I have been a humble private, and a general in braid,
 I have kept at bay, alone, a native army;
 I have faced a Bengal tiger, yet I haven't been afraid,
 For I've never feared that anything could harm me.
 I have swum where sharks were swarming, I have camp-
 ed where snakes were rife,
 I have braved a typhoon's perils nonchalantly,
 I have scattered bold bad gun-men quite regardless of my
 life,
 And I've often rescued princesses gallantly.
 There is not a sport I haven't tried, or game I haven't
 played
 In which I didn't prove the winning factor.
 I have never failed in anything with either man or maid—
 Oh! did I tell you?—I'm a movie actor.

THE LOVER'S REPROACH

MY darling of darlings, you ask if I love you
 When every day you have proof that I do.
 I swear by the sky that is azure above you
 That no one could give a devotion more true,
 There never in life could be any one sweeter
 Or dearer, more kindly, more lovely or fair
 No woman on earth could look daintier, neater
 Than you, my love-blossom, my heart's only care.

To love you, my dearest, is easy, I've said it
 A thousand times over and glad of the chance.
 For loving a woman like you is no credit;
 I think you'd inspire a stone man with romance.
 But dearest of angels I can't stand your mother,
 She makes me feel frantic for any old crime.
 And then there's that boulder of boulders, your brother,
 I'd cheerfully strangle him any old time.

Then again there's that smirker Louisa, your sister,
 Who never can see why she hasn't yet wed.
 Ye Gods! but before any living male kissed her
 He'd have to be slightly deranged in the head.
 Once again I must say that I'd very much rather
 Go into a dungeon with lions and snakes
 Than be left alone for an hour with your father
 And hear him relate how much money he makes.

V E R S I F L A G E

Your old uncle, too, he is far from amusing
With tales of his conquests in '72.
But never once yet have you caught me refusing
To listen to him or the rest of the crew.
But dear, is it right to doubt once if I love you
When all of these things you know well-to be true;
For I swear by the heaven's blue dome that's above you
They could all go and hang if it were not for you.

To My SWEETHEART

OF all my lover's songs this one shall be
Quite unrestricted, hedged by no restraint.
There'll be no shyly-hinted, *sotto voce* plaint
In this frank chant. My love for you quite free
I'll sing, though critical humanity
Acclaim my accents faulty, weak and faint.
I care not for a jealous world's complaint,
If this poor song but draw your smile to me.

Since first we met, I've worshipped at your shrine,
And proudly now to all I make it known.
To you I dedicate this heart of mine!
Within its realms *your* image I enthrone!
So, dear, your journey through the years postpone
And stay adorably forever *nine*.

A LOVE LYRIC

(1922 *Model*)

SAY Sid!
You peaches-and-creamy old kid;
I'm strong for you Sidney; you know what I mean —
There's no doll to touch you for beauty or bean;
Your eyes are just corking and so is your mouth
And no one compares with you North, West or South.
 You're so smart and all that
 And right under your hat
You've got stuff that leaves all the other Janes flat.
 You've a sort of an air
 Of a millionaire's queen
 As if you didn't care
 One darned Boston baked bean.
You're a perfectly peppy and jazzy old kid —
 Aren't you Sid?

V E R S I F L A G E

Old dear!

You act like a car-load of cheer.

I think of you days and I dream of you nights.

You're one of those — whatyoumaycallem — delights

That come to a chap when he's gloomy and sad

And suddenly lift him up, zip! and he's glad.

You're a pippin, a peach;

If you'll have me, I'll teach

You just how it feels to be wed to a leech.

Gee! I've fallen for you;

Just as hard as a brick —

On the level it's true

As you'll see mighty quick.

So let's hop it to church, like a snappy old kid —

Won't you Sid?

THE WAY

THE way to win a woman's heart
Has baffled many a lover.

It is not based on any art

That study can discover.

Some make vows on bended knee;

Some place wealth before her.

Some display a jealousy

To prove that they adore her.

Some her slightest wish obey;

Some refuse to heed her.

But if you would win your way,

Make her feel you need her.

A LOVER'S CHANT

MY love for you like a robe enfolds you
 Shielding you, dear, from the world's alarms;
 Close in its strong embrace it holds you
 Soft and as gentle as your own arms.

My love for you is a prayer I'm praying
 The dream I dream for you each night. . . .
 The echo of all my heart is saying,
 The sunbeam that floods my soul with light. . . .

My love for you is a gift I'm giving,
 To bless and glorify each day.
 My love for you is the life I'm living,
 And here at your feet that gift I lay.

SHALL I?

I AM fond of a girl, deeply, truly,
 But I know, from the loves of the past,
 That my passion, however unruly,
 Somehow or other won't last.

I don't want to love her forever,
 But I'm scared to inform her of this,
 For I fear if I do, she will never
 Endure my caress or a kiss.

So what shall I say? Don't be chary.
 Advise me, I beg it of you.
 Shall I tell her my love's temporary
 Or lie as all other men do?

THE CONFESSION

I HAVE never cared for fashion,
 Or indulged abnormal passion
 For the hue of socks, the cut of coats and such;
 I have given scant adherence
 To the ethics of appearance,
 And what I've known of manners wasn't much.

But now a new horizon
 Is before me; I've my eyes on
 Broader, better, higher, deeper ways,
 I am reading ads for clothing
 (Which till lately I'd been loathing,)
 And I'm shaving now at nights as well as days.

I am growing quite a dandy,
 Know the differences in candy
 And the places where one's flowers should be bought;
 It has dawned on me that living
 Is made happier by giving
 More attention to these details than I thought.

You may think some Maud or Mabel
 Is the reason why I'm able
 To get but two hours sleep each blessed night;
 You may smile and say it's Cupid
 Makes this versifier stupid —
 Well, I'm happy to inform you that you're right.

THE COMMON LOT

I 'VE loved Lenora many years,
 I've brooded, suffered, been in tears;
 I've woo'd Lenora ardently,
 With incandescent constancy.
 I've poured the fever of my soul
 Into my words and acts; the whole
 Of me vibrated at her wish —
 She treated me like some cold fish.

To Joan, upon the other hand,
 I've always been quite mild and bland.
 I've given her no passioned glance,
 It's always been the merest chance
 I've ever found myself alone
 At some soirée or ball with Joan.
 And yet though this is really true,
 She treats me like Lenora, too.

THE CONFLICT OF A SOUL

C ONSTANTIA has me in her snare;
She drives me almost to despair;
For me she gives no thought or care.
I know she's selfish through and through
She's vain and cruel, empty, too,
But what the deuce am I to do?
I love her!

Amelia's fine as purest gold;
She's never forward, cross or bold;
She always does the thing she's told.
I know she's generous and good;
Her love for me all tests has stood,
I wouldn't wed her if I could —
I hate her!

A SUMMER MEMORY

THOUGH it's ages since summer has fled,
 And it's months since we sat in the dell,
 I recall every word that you said ;
 I remember, remember you well.

Though winter is here and the snow
 Has spread her white cloak o'er the ground,
 I remember each ride and each row,
 And our matches at golf, round by round.

Every trip that we took I recall —
 The candies, the lunches and books,
 The orchids you wore at the ball,
 The gloves and the *perfume de luxe*.

Though it *was* but a Summer affair,
 And I don't quite remember your name,
 I distinctly recall you, I swear,
 (I have reasons for doing that same).

For though you are gone, you may bet
 That your mem'ry for me cannot fade
 Until each confounded old debt
 I contracted last Summer is paid.

THE LOST FRIEND

I LOST a boyhood friend last night,
 A friend I've valued many years.
 She shared my joys when things were bright
 And cheered me when beset by fears.
 Her friendship meant a lot to me
 And now it's gone beyond recall. . . .
 Last night it was: I went to see
 Her at her home, and in the hall
 She greeted me with that rare smile
 That lingers like a soft caress
 Upon her face. She stood there while
 I passed some comment on her dress,
 When suddenly, a blinding wave
 Swept over me. Until I die
 I won't forget the cry she gave
 As round her wound my arms and I
 Impassioned, folded her to me.
 I crushed her lips with kiss on kiss
 As in a dream, for neither she
 Nor I had ever thought of this.

 And this is why last night I lost a friend
 To gain the greatest gift the gods can send.

LOVE À LA CARTE

THE night is fairer, dearest girl,
Because you're here.
And joy takes on a swifter whirl
Because you're here.
The stars themselves far brighter shine
There's greater sparkle to the wine,
While life to me just seems divine
Because you're here.

There's double flavor to the food,
Because you're here.
The menu's more than twice as good,
Because you're here.
And twice as prompt the waiters do
Each gladsome service, thanks to you. . . .
Alas, the check is double too
Because you're here.

ALAS!

HE swore that he adored her madly
 And begged Elaine to be his wife.
 He asked her pleadingly and sadly
 To mend his tattered shreds of life.

She owned she *liked*, but didn't love him,
 Which made it wrong for her to wed.
 But he vowed by the stars above him
 That love would later come instead.

He told her in his ardent fashion,
 Her liking surely would be merged
 Into a great and splendid passion —
 If only she'd be his — he urged.

.
 And so, persuaded she was wed,
 Regarding him just as a brother.
 And love did come as he had said
 But sad to say — love for another.

YOU NEVER KNOW

JACK vowed his love upon his knees,
 And begged Lucilla to be kind;
 While Tom, with jaunty, careless ease,
 Just kissed her when he felt inclined.

She said she liked dear Jack's respect;
 He was as nice as nice could be,
 His conduct was so circumspect
 It caused her no anxiety.

She slapped Tom's face and told him straight
 She loathed the mention of his name.
 But strange the ways of maid and Fate —
 She married Thomas just the same.

V E R S I F L A G E

IF

IF you should find that you have been mistaken
All through these years in thinking me your friend,
And I should try within you to awaken
A love like mine and never more pretend —

Why shrink away? No reason for a tiff;
I didn't mean to hurt you. I said — IF.

If I should throw my arms quite tight around you,
And scorch your smiling lips with passioned kiss,
If I could make you feel my love had drowned you —
Would you be glad? Or take it all amiss?

Well, can't you answer? Don't draw up so stiff
I haven't done it, have I? I said — IF.

If I should whisper wildly that I love you,
And tell you you were more to me than life,
If I should swear that by the skies above you
I worship you — yes, you, another's wife —

Don't turn your head away. Don't sneer and sniff;
You needn't look insulted. I said — IF.

If some dark night when you were soundly sleeping,
And madd'ning love for you impelled me on,
If I came to you singing, sighing, weeping,
Would you relent? Or bid me "Sir, begone!"

Now don't be angry, dearest, wait a jiff;
I didn't say I'd do this. I said — IF.

WASTED

BENEATH an oak tree's grateful shade,
 Undying vows of love she made;
 You should have heard that pretty maid,
 When 'gainst my heart she'd sidle.
 My days were joyful and serene,
 And I, when worshipping my Queen,
 Was happier than I'd ever been,
 All through my summer idyl.

I wooed by day, I wooed by night,
 I couldn't bear her from my sight;
 For her I swore that black was white,
 My passion knew no bridle.
 But now the world seems dark and drear
 For she, alas, no more is near;
 And I have shed full many a tear,
 All through my summer idol.

For when we both returned to town
 She calmly, coldly turned me down,
 And on my fervent vows did frown.
 Perhaps some other bride'll
 Help blot out all the dim dead past
 For even my love will not last
 For one who played me loose and fast
 And made my summer idle.

TRY THIS ON YOUR JOANNA

YOU may stay out at night,
 You may swear black is white,
 Look as grouchy as sin and be surly.
 You may rave at the food,
 Say it's bad when it's good,
 You may come home to meals late or early.

You may flick your cigar
 On the rug, though it jar
 The sensitive nerves of the "madam."
 You may drink like a fish,
 Swear as much as you wish,
 And in other ways act the old Adam.

But you must not forget,
 That in order to get
 The freedom of action here stated,
 There is one thing that you
 Must be sure that you do
 For the lady to whom you are mated.

Ev'ry day tell your wife
 She's the joy of your life;
 Swear it's true by the heavens above her.
 You can have your own fling
 And do any darned thing
 If you just keep on *saying* you love her.

THE PHONE CALL

FOR years I've loved a girl named May
With passion deeper than the ocean;
There never passed a single day
Without some proof of my devotion.

We used to ride and drive and walk
In snow or rain or sultry weather.
We'd dance and golf or sit and talk
For blissful hours and hours together.

I sent her orchids by the ton,
Candy, books and many a jewel.
I hate to speak of what I've done
But gee! Some women can be cruel.

For all is over now, she's hurt
And mad with me beyond condoning,
Because I said "Is that you, Gert?"
Last night when May was telephoning.

YOU'LL NEVER KNOW

YOU'LL never know, Elaine, just all you meant
to me
Through those dear days that were and never more
shall be.
The pain that weights my soul no more your face to see,
You'll never know.

You'll never know, dear one, the awful gap it 'makes
In life for me now you are gone; it almost breaks
My heart to think of it — but oh! its weary aches
You'll never know.

You'll never know how much you soothed my hours of
strife
Or how your magic presence healed the ills of life
And Oh! Elaine the lies for you, I had to tell my wife —
You'll never know.

LA DONN' E MOBILE

BY golly, girls are queer and that's a fact.
 You never know just how they're going to act.
 Now there's Elaine whom I've adored for years.
 She keeps me filled with doubts and anxious fears.
 She's never twice the same, and yet I swear
 The more neglectful she, — the *less* I care.

Then you take Jessie, on the other hand.
 She's gentle, good, the kind who'll understand
 A fellow's feelings; sympathetic too,
 Quite pleased to do a thousand things for you.
 And yet, you know, the more she holds me dear,
 The *more* I care for her. Now, aren't girls queer?

CONSOLATION

SOME years ago I loved a maid
 Profoundly, in my ardent fashion.
 To coin a phrase, I fairly sprayed
 That poor dear girl with fiery passion.
 I lost in weight, I never slept,
 I talked to every one about her.
 Her pictures in my room I kept
 To prove I couldn't live without her.
 At every opportunity
 I praised her hair, her eyes, her carriage.
 I promised love eternally;
 A thousand times I proffered marriage.
 And she? She didn't do a thing
 But greet my soul's outbursts with laughter;
 And then to take away the sting
 She'd say "But you're a dear" just after.
 Oh how that girl tormented me!
 Her indecision kept me burning.
 I pleaded on my bended knee,
 But she was deaf to all my yearning.
 At last, one day, to my despair,
 I learned that she had wed another;
 A chap with very curly hair
 Who'd been to college with her brother.
 They'd gone and done it — snap — like that!
 Impulsively without reflection

And settled in a tiny flat
 Up in the Western Harlem section.
 At first I thought of suicide,
 But later found I wasn't willing
 To cast a shadow on a bride
 By such a selfish act as killing.
 And so I settled down to life,
 To find in work complete distraction,
 Forgetting trials, troubles, strife
 In business, enterprise and action.

Now, this occurred six years ago,
 While in the meantime I'd forgotten
 The girl who had distressed me so
 And made existence seem so rotten.
 By Fate's strange chance, the other night
 We met at some confounded dinner.
 Ye Gods! but she did look a sight,
 Her six years hadn't left her thinner.
 I hardly knew her till she smiled,
 Then recognized her odd expression;
 She simpered like a little child
 Who hoped to make a strong impression.
 She boasted of her babes and cook,
 Her car, her garden and her hubby;
 Her face had lost its winsome look,
 A double chin had made it chubby.
 She asked me why I hadn't wed,

And plagued me with her silly chatter,
 She babbled while I crumbled bread;
 My silence didn't seem to matter.
 I thought: can *this* be that Elaine
 Whom I had once adored so madly,
 Now grown indubitably plain
 And lacking charm and wit so badly!
 Oh! how I blessed my stars that night,
 When homeward *quite alone* returning,
 That dear Elaine had scorned my plight
 And shown no pity for my yearning.
 For what should I have done to-day,
 If I had been — what's called — successful
 And won Elaine? I'm frank to say
 I find the very thought distressful.

So lovers, do not be cast down
 If Fate, your wishes, seems to baffle.
 A later happiness may crown
 Initial losses in life's raffle.
 You should not fail to count the cost
 Of winning, when you go a-wooing;
 I know I *won* the day I *lost*
 Which may be just what you are doing.

TOMMYROTICA



MY ONE WEAKNESS

IF they tell me I'm handsome I grin,
 I *know* they don't mean what they say;
 For I'm angular, freckled, and thin
 And my eyes do not focus one way.

When they tell me I'm clever I smile,
 For I know they are pulling my leg.
 When they say that I'm smart and have style,
 I'm as frigid as yesterday's egg.

When I'm told I've a way with the girls
 That they find very hard to resist;
 That beside me most fellows look churls
 I feel like exclaiming "Desist!"

I'm immune to such flattering pleas
 Though they pour them out hot by the yard,
 But the phrase that holds music for me's
 "Boy! but you're working too hard."

PONS ASINORUM

THE other night I met a friend
 Who kindly took me home to dinner,
 And then suggested that we spend
 The evening seeing "*Saint or Sinner?*"

We saw a husband, lover, wife —
 The same old tiresome triangle —
 The same old British "smart set" life —
 The same old matrimonial tangle.

We saw a middle-aged M.P.
 Who, so devoted to his labors,
 Could never spare the time for tea
 Or calling with his wife on neighbors.

Poor Marcia, his enchanting bride,
 Quite takes to heart his sad defection
 And foolishly she turns aside
 For admiration and affection.

She smiles on Rodney Flete, a friend,
 Who seems to have no end of leisure,
 For eagerly he swears he'd spend
 His life in doing Marcia's pleasure.

Now Marcia, though of good intent
Sees far too much of Master Roddy
And flirts with him (through discontent)
Which isn't good for anybody.

Her husband George's time's too bent
Upon his dreams of rising higher
To some high post in parliament
To note his wife at play with fire.

But passion's like a blazing wood,
When started, nothing seems to dim it;
And though she swore that she'd been good,
Her husband thought she'd gone the limit.

To quench his ire, George has resort
To most expensive legal forces;
And thus we see him in a court
Where people go who want divorces.

The trial proceeds; — Marcia in tears
Is by her husband's counsel harassed;
While every word she speaks appears
To make her more and more embarrassed.

The evidence against the wife
Is flimsy quite beyond description —
Quite utterly untrue to life
But true, no doubt, to stage prescription.

Just as the tension's at its height
 And Marcia's cause is all but over
 A waiter swears that on *the* night
 He saw her with her aunt at Dover.

The suit's withdrawn; back home they go;
 George swears in future to do better.
 But as I sat through all this woe
 I wished, by heck! he'd never met her.

HOW THE STARS CAME

THE moon long ago went to powder her face,
 But the box that she held slipped and fell into
 space.

The powder was scattered, and now that is why
 You still see it sprinkled all over the sky.

A GENTLEMAN

A LITTLE boy was asked one day
 The meaning of "a gentleman,"
 And in his own delightful way
 He gave, as only children can,
 A definition of the word
 Which all the world might well have heard.
 "A gentleman," he said, "loves all
 That God created, great and small;
 To helpless people, help he gives,
 To beasts and everything that lives;
 A gentleman is kind, though he
 Has no one near to make him be."

THE SOLDIER'S MOTHER

EACH day you live
 Means one day more of life to her.
 Each thought you give
 Is more than honors can confer.
 Each letter sent
 Gives her a joy that floods her heart
 With sweet content,
 And makes her proud to do her part;
 But oh! the skies
 Are black if death should claim you, son,
 For Mother dies
 Ten thousand deaths when you die one.

MY FAVORITE READING

I'M not keen on heavy reading;
 Windy essays aren't my style;
 I'm quite deaf to fiction's pleading;
 Poems, too, just make me smile.
 I don't care for books on fighting,
 Tales of sea-life make me mad;
 Politics and dreamy writing
 Somehow seem to me as bad.
 But the kind of thing I swear by
 Is a work that no one quotes,
 I get information rare by
 Reading Nash's Program Notes.

Do read ultra Mr. Nash
 He'll show you how to cut a dash;
 Let him spend your dollars
 On new styles in collars,
 On underwear squander your cash.
 Have Beau Nash advise you,
 And he will surprise you,
 Let him be your mentor and guide.
 Why merciful heaven!
 He'll teach you eleven
 New ways that your tie should be tied.

V E R S I F L A G E

Formerly I'd go to dinner
Wearing shoes of brightest tan.
I wore checks to make me thinner
Like some youthful college man.
Scarfs in hundreds I would buy them,
Dots and stripes in green and red;
But I found I couldn't tie them,
So I wore a beard instead.
Now since I have read Beau Nash on
What's correct for me to wear
I've developed quite a passion
For selecting clothes with care.

Mr. Nash will tell you why
You should never, never buy
 Yellow striped stockings
 With pale purple clockings
To wear with a cherry pink tie,
 In Maine or Bahamas,
 Wear tartan pajamas —
White nightgowns are not in the swim.
 You may feel unhappy,
 But gee! you'll look snappy
In anything chosen by him.

HIS MOTHER SPEAKS

GOD never gave a happy mother
A better son.
No sisters ever had a brother
Like this dear one.
For thirty years, unbroken joy
He's given me;
How happy each day with my boy
Must Elsa be.

HIS WIFE SPEAKS

NOT one hour's happiness I've known
Since I wed Jim;
I scarcely breathe, unless alone
Away from him.
Each day, my life a living Hell
In torment seems
Good God! what lies these poets tell
'Of lovers' dreams.

TO A FRIEND'S CHILD

LITTLE bud so gently growing
 In Life's garden sweet and fair,
 Love's own fragrance you're bestowing,
 With a beauty rich and rare.

Little bloom of fairy glory
 Tinted still with sunrise gold,
 You are like a living story
 Just commencing to unfold.

You must be some dainty flower
 Which an angel's hands have sown,
 I would give the world for dower
 Could I have you for my own?

SPRING

IN Winter, I am old and wise;
 In April I grow young again;
 For Spring flings blossoms in my eyes
 That blind me both to years and pain.
 Spring makes me madly, wildly gay,
 I want to laugh and dance and sing;
 When Spring comes, life seems only play
 Oh, why can't all the year be Spring!

THE FALLEN STAR

I PLAYED Othello once with Booth,
Supported Barrett in Macbeth.
I toured with Mansfield in his youth,
And starred before Modjeska's death.
I've mastered seven hundred roles,
And played two hundred different parts;
I've wrung spectators' inward souls
And filled with joy a million hearts.
As recently as nineteen three,
When playing out in Keokuk,
Five thousand came to welcome me;
But since that year I've had no luck.

Today my life is null and void,
I'm "atmosphere" for Harold Lloyd.

When Ada Rehan rose on high
I helped her conquer every part;
A star I shone in splendor's sky
When acting really was an art.
Oh! things were different with me then
When brains and merit were the rage
And educated gentlemen,
Not mumbling hucksters, ruled the stage.

V E R S I F L A G E

Today with movies everywhere
The art of acting's never seen;
While audiences sit and stare
At puppet nonsense on a screen.

And now, to even get employed,
I'm "atmosphere" for Harold Lloyd.

HIS LETTERS

A month ago the cable read
That he was dead;
But ever since that awful day
His letters still come and they say
We're not to worry . . . that he's well . . .
At first, oh, reading them was Hell.

But now they bring a kind of joy
From our dear boy,
Although, of course, we know, before
We open them, that he's no more. . . .
It's queer, but getting them just seems to me
Like proofs of immortality.

A CHILD'S PRAYER

PLEASE, God, I'd like to send a prayer
 'Way up to You in Heaven there;
 No one taught this prayer to me —
 It just came, God; and you'll soon see
 It isn't just the kind of one
 They make you say when day is done.
 I hope you won't be angry, God,
 Or think my prayer unkind or odd.
 But what I want to ask is: "Won't
 You stop Mamma from saying 'Don't'?"

It's 'Don't do this' and 'Don't do that'
 'Don't touch your face' 'Don't twist your hat'
 'Don't scuff those shoes' 'Don't lick that stick'
 'Don't be so slow' 'Don't talk so quick'
 'Don't eat so much' 'Don't stand and stare'
 'Don't scratch that slate' 'Don't move that chair'
 'Don't muss your hair' 'Don't suck your thumb'
 'Don't answer back' 'Don't sing or hum'.
 So hear my prayer, dear God, and won't
 You stop Mamma from saying 'Don't'?

A CHRISTMAS LAMENT

LAST year at Christmas time, Mama
 Gave me some gloves and ties and socks;
 And then to make things worse, my Pa
 Gave me some gaiters in a box.

I got a muffler from Aunt Sue,
 A pair of shoes from Brother Ned.
 I got a dozen collars too,
 That came to me from Uncle Fred.

I didn't get a single thing
 Like skates or knives or games to play,
 But everybody seemed to bring
 What Mother buys me anyway.

I want some toys upon my tree
 And not just things to use and wear,
 For what's a Christmas tree to me
 If only useful gifts are there?

MY LIMIT

I CONFESS that I've been guilty of atrocities galore
 In prose and essay form, as well as verse.
 I have written passionate paragraphs inspired by the war,
 I have perpetrated fiction too, and worse.
 I have written words and music for a patriotic song,
 I have even had the nerve to write a play.
 I have published polyphonic things decidedly too long;
 I have satirized the foibles of the day.
 There is hardly any writing you can name
 Or any kind of literary sin
 I haven't yet committed, but I swear that, just the same,
 I've never written parodies on Kipling's "Gunga Din."

TO A FALLEN PLAYER

YOU heard them call your cue; you didn't hesitate,
 But ventured eagerly to play your role.
 You asked no question of impending fate,
 But put into your work your very heart and soul.

 You didn't dally in the wings, but went straight on
 To play the bravest part you'd ever played;
 And though the curtain's down and you have gone —
 We never shall forget the exit that you made.

THE WAIL OF THE UNTIDY MAN

I'M not exactly what you'd call a very tidy man,
 I drop my clothes around my room in any place I can;
 And yet I always know just where to find them night
 and day
 Except on those occasions when my wife puts things
 away.

My shirts I heap upon the floor
 My hats are with my sox
 My brush is in my bureau drawer
 My comb is in a box
 I keep my collars in a hat
 My razors in a jar
 Some people think me mad for that
 But I know where they are.
 My bills are underneath my bed
 My shoes are on a shelf
 Conveniently above my head
 Where I can help myself.

I never waste a second's time to lay my hands upon
 A single thing to read or drink or clothing to put on;
 But let my wife just tidy up, just let her have her fling
 And then for weeks and weeks and weeks I can't find
 one darned thing.

THE CHARITY BAZAAR

JEFFERSON Allenby Cyril de Roque
 Happened to find himself horribly broke.
 Labor of any kind Jefferson spurned,
 Couldn't get credit wherever he turned
 So, in despair at his terrible fate
 He instantly thought of a Charity Fête.

He went to a printer and made him donate
 Some beautiful posters announcing the date
 Of an Orphan's Bazaar, showing pictures of flags
 Of all of the Allies and children in rags
 Looking painfully thin and appealingly sick
 To give the announcement a "punch" and a "kick."

Then Jefferson used every prominent name
 On circular letters to further the game;
 He visited shops and got merchandise free —
 Satins and silver and linen and tea,
 Pictures, tobacco and needlework too,
 Laces and furniture, antique and new.
 He wheedled and grovelled and flattered galore
 Until he had more than you'd find in a store.

The Fête drew enormously morning and night
 And visitors bought every object in sight.
 They went into raffles, took chances in "bags"
 And paid fancy prices for rubbish and rags.
 For charity no one begrudged what he gave,
 And nobody scrimped or attempted to save.
 People came flocking from near and from far
 To pay their respects to the Orphan's Bazaar.

Alas! When the time came to close the account
 To find out exactly what was the amount
 The poor starving Orphans were going to get
 Quite shocked and surprised they discovered a debt —
 Instead of the profit they all hoped to see
 Resulting from working for sweet Charity.
 But Jefferson proved it in plain black and white,
 There wasn't a dollar of profit in sight.
 He showed that the cost of the Fête was immense
 With the only thing left an enormous expense.
 By the time they got through all the muddle and mess
 Away up in smoke went the wondrous success;
 And the Orphans who should have got clothing and
 bread
 Owed Jefferson three hundred dollars instead.

-----BUT HE'S WELL-MEANING

IF you think I have a horrid disposition
 And my temper is the worst you ever saw
 If you think my life a barefaced imposition
 And my chatter just the wagging of my jaw,
 For goodness sake then say just what you think;
 Don't imagine that my pride is overweening.
 Enumerate each vice I've got — remember that I drink
 But don't you dare to say that I'm well-meaning.

When women think one of their friends is homely
 They do not voice the thoughts they hold, but say
 They must confess she's not exactly comely,
 And roast her negatively — that's their way.
 They mention that her style is almost shocking
 That all her clothes would benefit by cleaning
 And when they finish up their awful knocking
 They don't forget to add that she's well-meaning.

Let any one accuse you of a murder
 Let the world say that you always beat your wife
 Let them state you have the manners of a herder
 And that you have always led a frightful life.
 Don't bother to deny such accusations,
 Don't let them think such vices you'd be screening;
 But don't you even let your wife's relations
 Tell any one they think that you're well-meaning.

THE CITY'S CHARM

I HURL my curse at the kind of verse
 That boasts of the country's joys
 Of the river's flow and the moonlight glow
 And the bare-foot freckled boys.
 When poets bleat of the golden wheat
 I could scream at that sort of thing;
 Or when they thrill at some mildewed mill
 And the burgeoning forth of Spring.

I like my feet on a well-paved street,
 Where there are no gnats or bees.
 And at every shop, entranced I stop —
 I much prefer them to trees.
 The traffic's roar means, to me, much more
 Than the low of the browsing herd;
 While a street-car gong is a sweeter song
 Than the tweet of some dinky bird.

You can have your tramp on the dust or damp
 Of a rutty rural road;
 Give me the smells and the friendly yells,
 Where millions have their abode.
 You can sprawl your way on a load of hay
 Gazing up at an empty sky,
 I'd rather ride on the downtown side
 Of a bus where the crowds roll by.

Sing all you please of the buds and trees
 Or the silk of the waving corn;
 You can hymn your praise to the harvest days
 Or the sun in the early morn.
 Give me one night of the town's delight,
 A concert, a dinner or play
 With a pal to chaff or a woman to laugh
 At whatever you do or say.

For it isn't the charm of a field or farm
 That makes life seem worth while;
 And it isn't the flowers nor the peaceful hours
 Nor the presence of wealth or style.
 And it isn't the green of a woodland scene
 Like a flag before you unfurled
 That brings you joy; no, it's this my boy —
 It's the people who make the world.

COMPLEXITY

NO man is merely one, he's three —
 The man he thinks himself to be,
 The man that other people see,
 And then the man that's really he.

V E R S I F L A G E

A LITERARY BLAST

I'M getting sick of all the so-called younger writing men —

The kind who revel in slime and sex whenever they hold a pen;

The kind who shove in some asterisks when they don't know what to say;

Who search their minds for risqué plots and words that sound outré;

They give me a pain in the cerebrum and their novels leave me cold;

But every time I say: "What rot!" they snigger: "You're getting old."

When I read their intumescent guff with its infinite detail

Describing the terrible turgid trials of some amorous youthful male

Intussusception comes over me, and I'd like to fling a bomb

At the whole darned snoopy writing crowd who act like Peeping Tom.

But whenever I tell them that I think their work's just filthy mould,

They only smile at me and say: "You must be getting old."

THE PRAYER

I PRAYED intensely, fervently
That what I longed for might come true.
I knelt in tears the whole night through
That He might grant my prayer to me.

And now, my heart is sore ; alas !
No power my anguish can console.
Earth holds no more unhappy soul
Since what I prayed for came to pass.

OH MAN!

YOU can say that he drinks or belabors his wife,
You can say that he leads a most dissolute life,
You can say that his duty he lazily shirks,
That he loafs at his ease while his poor mother works.
He will stand for these slams, won't deny any rumor,
But he'll squeal if you say he has no sense of humor.

KATIE AT "THE BAT"

'T WAS at
"The Bat" —

The stage was black,
The house was hushed,
And all up my back
The gooseflesh rushed.
I panted hard with nerves all tense,
And thought the mystic scene immense.

Just as the lights began to glow,
A girl who sat across the aisle
All dressed up in the latest style
Leaned forward to address her beau.

Much quieter than the well-known mouse
Was that excited, wrought-up house
When out the gloom this girl let fly:
"George, I'm not fat as that, am I?"

A JUVENILE DILEMMA

WHY is it that the things I do
 Are often not the things I should?
 Just what's a fib and what is true?
 And what is it that makes you good?

My mother says I'm awful bad,
 But I don't mean to be at all.
 I often wonder how my Dad
 Was always good when he was small.

Now why are right things hard to do?
 And wrong things just like a b c?
 I wish to goodness that I knew,
 But no one's ever 'splained to me.

THE DRAMA IN NEW YORK

CONVINCE a New Yorker a show is a corker,
 Don't mention the music, libretto or star;
 Don't tell him the chorus makes up right before us,
 Nor breathe that the tenor arrives in a car;
 Forget all the dreamy, the peaches and creamy
 Sweet whistleable numbers they sing every night;
 Don't be so suburban 's to say Joseph Urban
 Has made all the scenery look a delight.
 To gain his attention you don't need to mention
 These items to prove that the show is a treat —
 To make it allure him, just calmly assure him
 You *know* he can't possibly purchase a seat.

LETHE

I PACE the leaden street. The starlit skies
 Look down and mock my soul, long desolate.
 Within my breast I bear a heavy weight
 The smile upon my painted face belies.
 Like some night-spider seeking human flies
 I keep my furtive watch, and as I wait
 Men come and go and leer. God! how I hate
 To see the brutes undress me with their eyes.

As slowly up and down I stroll the street,
 A man draws near. Cloaked by the kindly night,
 I stand in wait for him with heart a-beat,
 Until he stops beneath the pallid light.
 I smile, but as he turns, I quake with fright,
 And fear lends wings unto my aching feet.

RECIPE FOR A CRITIC

YOU can't make me grovel in front of a novel
 No matter if written by Bennett or Wells;
 I know that a critic must hurl most mephitic
 Remarks at each volume, however it sells.

I sum up as babble, Ben Hecht and James Cabell,
 (I don't care a snap how their feelings are hurt)
 I count that day wasted when I've not lambasted
 Some scribbler whose works I consider as dirt.

With Rinehart and Lewis my regular cue is
 To say that they copy De Morgan or Moore;
 All native-son writers I sneer at as blighters,
 Whose art is so feeble it cannot endure.

My *nil admirari* not once do I vary,
 I never admit any book's good or true;
 I empty my chalice of well-chosen malice
 And squirt inky poison on ev'ry review.

When I find an error I love to bring terror
 To authors especially if they are new.
 I make their pet phrases look silly as blazes
 By quoting them minus a comma or two.

I'm daily declaiming the past, and exclaiming
 That no one today can write readable prose;
 For to find yourself quoted as one who is noted,
 Be sure to make "knocking" your permanent pose.

PARROTICA



THOSE JAPANESE THINGS

I

YOUR eyes are piercing,
 Stabbing me painfully —
 (Life treads my corns.)

II

My tears are falling;
 The taste is very salty —
 (I swim with open mouth.)

III

Seeds from your love
 Plant themselves in my heart —
 (Anemophilous one!)

IV

Your words abrase my heart
 And grate my soul
 (I bite unseeded prunes.)

V

The rose I pluck has thorns
 They red my hand —
 (How meaningless the kitten's scratch.)

VI

The wind rushes at the sky
 And splits the clouds —
 (My tires are down.)

VII

They call these jerky images
 High art — *hokku*
 (I merely split my lip).

THE SUMMER VACATIONIST TO HIS CITY FRIEND

(Blushing toward Henley)

OUT of the quilts that cover me,
Fresh as a dweller at the pole,
I send this, chortling in my glee
Because I'm cool from head to sole.

By day, in sweaters at my stance
I join the eager golfing crowd.
By night I row or walk or dance
Or cycle miles with head low-bowed.

Beyond these coral isles I know
It's over ninety in the shade;
While here you'd think there must be snow,
Or icebergs melting in the glade.

It matters not how hot the hole
Where you now curse your torrid fate,
I have a rubber on each sole,
I have a fire in my grate.

THE CHRISTMAS MAGAZINES

(Kneeling toward Longfellow)

DID you know the Christmas numbers,
Which you read this afternoon
'Tween your wakings and your slumbers
Were prepared way back in June?

Long ago in summer weather
Were their scenes of ice and snow,
Fancifully put together
To incite a Christmas glow.

And their plots, so timely human, —
It is hard to realize
Some poor sweltering man or woman
Wrote 'midst sunburn, sand and flies.

Christmas magazines remind us
That we live in forward times:
(In a month long left behind us
I began these Christmas rhymes).

IF THE MOVIE WRITERS TAKE UP POETRY

A THWART the rock-girt isle of life
 Hate, like a fusty fungus, spreads
 To burgeon forth revenge and strife
 And raise up passion's hydra heads.

Atop the gleaming hills, the sun,
 Blest heavenly orb of warmth and light,
 Recks not that foulest deeds are done
 Beneath its iridescence bright.

Hard by a peaceful verdant vale,
 Afar from strife and war's alarms,
 The little town of Lilydale
 Nestles like a babe in arms.

And yet beside its purling streams
 Men lived whose passions oft ran hot,
 Disturbing peaceful holy dreams
 Of others who dwelt near the spot.

John Vedder (*played by Colwell Sward*)
 Weaves most dishonest plots to gain
 The fortune of May Gleam, his ward
 (*Played by Minerva Fenton Fane.*)

Tense and distressed Van Diemen stands,
(Van Diemen — Oswald Chester Blake)
 Imprinting kisses on May's hands
 As though love's frenzied thirst to slake.

Anon Vanilla Rinderpest
(Played by Elaine Mimosa Krell.)
 Withdraws the papers from her breast
 As Vedder loudly hisses: "Hell."

And in the village church we see
 Those twain made one as Fate foretold —
 The maid as virtuous as can be,
 The lad of brawn with heart of gold.

* * * * *

The Villain's foiled; life's gall he tastes;
 Defeat has stalked the things he prized;
 Crime's banished to the desert wastes
 While love's dear dream is realized.

THE MOVIE WRITER'S APOLOGY TO AN AUTHOR'S MS.

(With abject acknowledgments to Ernest Dowson)

LAST night, last night, sweet manuscript, thou
cam'st to me

And I was asked to make thee ready for the screen.
Thy true and tender tale of love in Arcady,
I took and filled with action, incident and passion;
Although I changed the plot and every scene,
I have been faithful to thee, Scenario, in my fashion.

To give each reel a punch, I introduced a tramp
Who set the banker's ball-room carelessly afire;
I cut the child completely out, and made a vamp
Go redmouthed through the desert babbling of her
passion;

Although I spared the thief and killed the squire,
I have been faithful to thee, Scenario, in my fashion.

The railway accident, the murder and the race
Were added just to give the action that it lacked;
And then I made the vamp slap Monmouth's ugly face
To have that scented villain "register" his passion;
Although I have not tried to be exact,
I have been faithful to thee, Scenario, in my fashion.

Instead of valleys green, a gilded cabaret
Seemed best to show the life the hunted hero led.
There wasn't any vital interest in the way
Thy feeble pages showed the aftermath of passion;
But now I know that film will knock 'em dead —
I have been faithful to thee, Scenario, in my fashion.

THE TALE OF A SKIRT

(With a low bow to Tom Hood)

WITH fingers callous and stained,
 With eyelids beery and red,
 A writer sat in a blue burnous,
 On the edge of a double bed.
 Scratch — scratch — scratch
 He scribbled his story of dirt,
 In a manner that Hollywood can't match
 He wrote "The Tale of a Skirt."

Sex — sex — sex
 In words most suggestively vile,
 And sex — sex — sex
 In the latest Freudian style;
 Line and chapter and verse,
 Verse and chapter and line,
 Making each character worse
 Than the slimiest kind of swine.

Sex — sex — sex
 Men with other men's wives;
 Sex — sex — sex
 Leading super-erotic lives.
 Drinking — cards — divorce,
 Jewels and parties gay,
 With no more brains than a horse,
 No dress but a negligée.

With fingers callous and stained,
 With eyelids beery and red,
 A writer sat in a blue burnous,
 On the edge of a double bed.
 Scratch — scratch — scratch
 He scribbled his story of dirt,
 In a manner that Hollywood can't match,
 He wrote "The Tale of a Skirt."

THE LIMIT

I CAN stand "No he don't" or "I haven't got none"
 "There ain't" or "between you and I"
 "Athaletic," "He useter," or even "I done."
 None of these brings the blood to my eye.
 I can stand hearing "There goes an areoplane"
 Or "One never knows now, do they?"
 "Oh, he's gonna go" ne'er arouses disdain.
 Or sentences starting with "Say."
 I don't mind the man who insists upon "like" when "as"
 is the word he should speak.
 But the guy I abhor is that ignorant bore, who calls every
 darned thing "most unique."

EMETIC SCORN

One of those realistic stories

MY father's vest is stained with bits of egg —
 My mother, drunk, sits sobbing in her tea,
 Young Michael's kicking sister on the leg
 While mad desire stirs restlessly in me.

My father, rising, spits in mother's eye;
 She puts her fingers idly to her nose.
 The greasy dishes on the table lie
 As round the room a buzzing blowfly blows.

A frightful noise assails my vibrant ear,
 I look to see the author of the call. . . .
 My uncle stands there yelling for his beer
 As grandma scuffs her slippers down the hall.

I ask myself why I should longer stay
 Within these walls of turbulence and wrack;
 A thousand times I've tried to run away
 But lack of opium always brings me back.

What is that sound? — a scream, and then a thud
 Re-echoes from the partly furnished room
 I hasten there and weltering in her blood
 My mother lies — pa's beaned her with a broom.

.
 "Here's Truth indeed," the younger critics cry.
 "This man sees life, and seeing, dares to write."
 But as I read their words, I faintly sigh
 And wish that God had given him better sight.

HOW THEY BROUGHT THE BAD NEWS TO A
GENT AT JAKE'S

(With apologies to Robert Browning)

I LOOKED at the menu, and Henry and he;
I ordered, Jim ordered, we ordered all three;
"At once," Henry cried as the waiter withdrew.
"Sure thing," he replied, "I will put it right through."
We turned to the rolls and the butter with zest
And hoped that it wouldn't take long for the rest.

Not a word to each other; we ate and we ate
And cleaned up the food that was heaped on each plate.
We started with oysters and swallowed three score;
Then soup, steak and onions and many things more,
Such as bacon and kidneys, eggs, salad and peas,
Two helpings of pie and a half pound of cheese.

At ice cream Jim groaned and exhausted, cried: "Gee!
I'll be darned if there's one inch of space left in me."
And rising he staggered across to the door
Assuring me he couldn't eat any more.
At the exit he turned with a smile wan and grim
And that was the last time we gazed upon Jim.

So, we were left ordering, Henry and I,
Refilling our glasses, repeating on pie;
Four different desserts in their turn then we tried,
With roquefort and camembert cheese on the side.
But, just as the coffee cups came into sight
"Oh gosh!" muttered Henry and turned ashy white.

"Why Henry, what's happened?" I cried in alarm.
 "Was the sherbert too sweet? Did the cheese do you harm?"

But before he could answer he fled from the place
 With a most English-channelly look on his face.
 Thus dizzy and flushed I was left all alone
 With a heart that was light but a stomach like stone.

Then I cast loose my collar, my tie I let fall,
 Unbuttoned my waist-coat, belt-buckle and all;
 I gazed at the table which looked like a wreck
 As I signalled the waiter to bring me the check.
 "The bad news," I cried, "for the drinks and the food,"
 And zip! right there with it the waiter soon stood.

* * * * *

I stared at the check with a groan and a whine,
 And all I remember is, — crowds flocking round,
 As I sat, with my head 'twixt my hands, on the ground.
 While they poured vichy down that parched gullet of
 mine
 Which a friendly guest said with the kindest intent
 Should be "free with the bad news they brought the poor
 gent."

EXOTICA



AN AFTER-THOUGHT

IT is Spring-time in Australia and my heart with
 longing fills
 For the land where wattle scents the crystal air,
 Where the kookaburra's mocking laugh re-echoes through
 the hills;
 Where the gullies hide the fern and maiden-hair.

I can almost feel the sunshine that comes flooding
 through the green;
 I can see the waves that break on Manly Beach;
 I can smell the giant gum-trees on the road to
 Narrabeen;
 I still can hear the parrakeets' shrill screech.

But although I love the bush-land, I will never take the
 track
 That leads to New South Wales, however fair —
 For in spite of all my dreaming, I'm afraid if I went
 back

My creditors might make me settle there.

AN AUSTRALIAN IN NEW YORK

THE other day I chanced to stop
 To gaze into a florist's shop
 And there I saw a golden sprig
 Of wattle blossom; 'twasn't big,
 But seeing that lone flower filled
 My soul with memories that thrilled.
 I dashed inside for *auld lang syne*
 And made that bit of wattle mine.

The fragrance of that dainty flower
 Made me remember many an hour
 Spent wand'ring through the bush in Spring,
 When wattle perfumed everything.
 Once more in fancy I could see
 The golden masses on each tree
 Like tiny bells, that seemed to ring
 As passing breezes made them swing.

.

Though you may search the world around,
 No vision ever will be found
 Like wattle time in New South Wales.
 Beside its glory all else pales;
 The wonder cannot half be told
 Of that Spring miracle in gold
 Ah! how the scent of one small spray
 Takes me back to yesterday.

WASTE

I'VE kept the books for twenty years
 For Lampson, Billings, Stowe and Flete
 An export house. They own the piers
 That fringe the back of Portage Street.

For twenty years my chair I've twirled
 And watched their ships sail round the world.

For twenty years I've slaved and slaved
 With just one goal in front of me
 And all that time I've scrimped and saved
 Against the day when I'd be free.

But now my slaving days are past
 And freedom's come to me at last.

For twenty years I've dreamed mad dreams
 Of dashing through a spray-filled breeze
 In clipper ships with creaking beams
 To palm-fringed isles in coral seas.

And as I kept my books each day
 My soul on travels flew away.

V E R S I F L A G E

I've longed to visit Zanzibar
Beloochistan and Suringam
And Nijni Novgorod's bazaar
Tasmania, Labrador, Siam.

At last it's mine to see Lahore
Sumatra, Sydney, Singapore.

Oh God! to think that now I'm free
To go and visit where I please;
That I can sail to any sea
Or live a life of tropic ease!

But now there's none to say me "Nay"
I've grown too old to go away.

SHEARING TIME IN AUSTRALIA

THE Wombo sheds are humming with the murmur
of the wheels,
The shearers' busy click-click pricks the air.
As fleeces fall like snowflakes, the merinos kick their
heels,
And skip back to the paddocks' sunlit glare.

I can hear the shearers singing as they go about their
task,
Interrupted by the *baas* of hordes of sheep;
I can smell the pungent tar-brush right beside them in
its cask,
To dab the wounds when scissors slip too deep.

"Thirty bob the bloomin' 'undred" is the pay the
"barbers" get;
Out of that they have to settle for their grub.
And however good the season, they are always tight in
debt
To the storehouse on the "station" and the pub.

But the shearers never worry, it is foreign to their creed,
No trials ever make their spirits flag.
Give them tea, tobacco, flour, that is all they seem to
need,
And a "billy" and a blanket for their "swag."

V E R S I F L A G E

When the clip is near completion, then there comes the
shearer's ball;

(The only ball worth going to, I vow.)

I can smell the gum-trees' branches tacked about each
slabside wall;

I can hear the concertinas even now.

You should see the crew of boys and girls who've driven
miles and miles

From farms and stations, north, south, east and west,

You forget their crude appearance in their warm and
happy smiles,

You forget the way they dance or how they're dressed.

You'll see women gaily waltzing who can plough and
reap and milk,

Or yoke a team of bullocks in a trice.

They make jolly fine companions though their dresses
aren't of silk,

Or their manners what Fifth Avenue calls nice.

All the men are shy and burly, of a silent turn of mind,
Quite unable to converse at any length.

But beneath that taciturnity a heart of gold you'll find,
As well as patience, gentleness and strength.

* * * * *

Dear old shearing time at Wombo — how the scenes all
re-appear!

How vividly I see each friendly face!

But in spite of Wombo's wonders I shall keep on living
here,

Because the mortgagee now owns the place.

AN OLD FRIEND

THERE'S a useless old horse in my paddock
That no one's permitted to ride.

He's as plump and rotund as a shaddock—
Does nothing but eat, darn his hide.

His years are about twenty-seven;
He limps and his withers aren't right;
But no two-year-old this side of Heaven
Compares with that horse in my sight.

Though he's ancient, decrepit and wheezy,
Though today he can't run very fast,
There's a long trip for me he makes easy—
He can trot me right back to the past.

V E R S I F L A G E

A GEOGRAPHIC LOVE SONG

IN the wilds of Madagascar or the hills of Samothrace,

There may be some village maiden who suggests your lovely face.

On the sands of old Sahara or by Baden-Baden's cures
May be some delightful vision who, perhaps, has eyes like yours.

Where the warm Pacific breakers kiss Samoa's palm-fringed sands

There may be some dusky Venus who can boast as perfect hands.

Sail the coast from Spain to Suez, then from Aden journey south

You may see, perchance, three women who have half as rare a mouth.

'Mid the woods of Tutuila, or some other sea-girt isle,
One fair native may be dwelling who has something like your smile.

Where Colombo gleaming glistens — verdant land beyond compare —

Some sweet Cinghalese may live there who has your bronze-golden hair.

Hidden in Tasmania's gullies where the fern trees spread their wreath

Some young Lubra may be lying who is blessed with whiter teeth.

.....
If you search you may discover, on these variegated tours,
Face or figure which a lover may consider fair as yours.

But though you may seek forever, you will find that this
is true —

No *one* woman living ever could be lovelier than you.

THE ADVENTURER'S LAMENT

WHEN Spring is here I always say
If I could have a holiday
I'd take it in the Spring.
But I'm glued to a desk all day,
For work is heaviest in May,
Confound the blooming thing!

And then when Summer comes along
And Nature sings her siren song,
I dream of woods and fish.
But when I try to get away
My relatives all come and stay
Much longer than I wish.

When hoary Winter swings around,
And snow's white blanket's on the ground
The forest calls me still.
But somehow I have always found
When Winter comes I'm tied and bound
To do another's will.

But Autumn time is best of all!
I'd like to tramp throughout the Fall
And lead a gypsy life
Quite free from every city thrall;
But when I hear the woodland call,
I also hear my wife!

V E R S I F L A G E

AN AUSTRALIAN LAMENT

It is Autumn in Australia and my heart is sick for
home
Where the waratah and wattle are ablaze
How I long to be at Wombo where the sheep and cattle
roam,
And a life that's in the open thrills your days.

I have had my fill of cities with their stifling, crushing
pain,
Where you fight for mere existence every day.
If you win, the taste is bitter, for you know your rotten
gain
Is snatched from some one else who has to pay.

And it doesn't matter where you are, the farce is just
the same —
In Boston, Paris, London or in Perth.
You win, I lose — I win, you lose — the boresome
stupid game
Goes on and on in every town on earth.

V E R S I F L A G E

I want to leave the city's blare for the Bushland's
 awesome hush,
Where there's room for every one who wants to live;
Far removed from greed and grafters, slums and subways,
 rot and rush,
Where your days slip gently by through old Time's sieve.

Yes, it's Autumn in Australia and the golden days are on
While the harvest's being gathered in with care.
How I'd love to sail for Sydney, how I'm aching to be
 gone,
And how I hate to be there when I'm there.

CHRISTMAS 1922

IN far-off, ancient Galilee
 He walked his lonely way
 In meekness and humility
 He sanctified each day.

He glorified His wondrous hours
 With prayer and Christly deeds
 That blossomed forth like fragrant flowers
 To bless all human needs.

Because His ways were not as theirs
 Men spurned the path He trod.
 They scorned His sacrifice and prayers;
 They slew the Son of God.

.

I wonder, were He here to-day
 Exactly what we'd do —
 Would we accept His loving sway
 Or crucify Him too?

Qualms

A *S I sit here beneath the lamp tonight
And proudly read this little book of mine
With that first flush of fatherhood's delight
That makes a homely infant seem Divine,
I wonder, as I fondly scan each verse
If, in a month, or week, or even less,
The very sight of it will make me curse
And wish I hadn't let it go to press.*







